



## Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

— Making a positive difference through education and service —

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### Guidance Letter

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To: SPOE Staff, On-going Service Coordinators

From: Mary Corey, Director, Special Education Data Coordination and Pam Williams,  
Director, Special Education Compliance

Subject: “No Provider Available” Documentation

A “No Provider Available” (NPA) option is being added to the SPOE software which will allow “authorizations” to be entered for services for which a provider is not available. This information will be used to assess provider availability and to target provider recruitment efforts. Since provider availability is such a large issue in many areas of the state, it is important for all Service Coordinators to take two actions:

1. For the future, if an IFSP team decides that a service is necessary, but no provider is available, the service should be included in the IFSP and the information sent to the SPOEs for data entry. The service should list all information required for authorizations (location, frequency, intensity, start and end dates, etc.), but the provider would be NPA, and a reason for NPA must be included. See reasons and rules for use of NPA below.
2. For existing IFSPs, if there are IFSP services that are not being provided because no provider is available, please forward that information to the SPOEs so that they can enter that service in the electronic record. The IFSP must reflect the identified services and document the intent to provide compensatory services when a provider is located. Again, all information required for authorizations must be provided to the SPOEs, but the provider would be NPA, and the reason for NPA must be included. See reasons and rules below.

Every effort should be made to locate a provider for the service prior to selecting “No Provider Available.” These efforts should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Checking with all possible providers in the county and adjacent counties and documenting the reasons they are unavailable to provide the service

- Taking the child to the provider's location. Justification for going outside of the Natural Environment would be that no provider is available to go to the natural environment, and Service Coordinators would need to continue to assist the parent with locating a provider who will go to the natural environment.

**If there is a provider available, but the parent does not want that provider, then that is considered to be a refusal of services.** In this case, the service would not be listed on the IFSP, but it would be documented in case notes that the parent had refused services and the reason for the refusal.

If a First Steps provider also works for another agency or agencies (e.g., Home Health) and they will not accept the family as a First Steps client, but will accept them as a Home Health client, and there are no other providers available, then the service would still be listed on the IFSP as "No Provider Available" with Reason #2, and the Service Coordinator would continue to look for a provider, even if the parent chooses in the interim to go to the provider through Home Health. If, at a later time, the Service Coordinator finds the parent a provider, but the parent chooses to remain with the Home Health provider, then at that time it would be considered a parent refusal of First Steps services, and the service would be removed from the IFSP and documented in case notes as indicated above.

#### **Rules for Selecting "No Provider Available"**

- Service must still be listed on IFSP and entered in the child's electronic record
- Compensatory services must be offered
- Service Coordinator has checked with all possible providers within a reasonable geographic area
- Service Coordinator continues to assist parent to locate provider
- Documentation of contacts with all providers must be maintained.

#### **Reasons for Selecting "No Provider Available"**

1. No provider in area – Use this reason when no providers are listed on the matrix for that area, and all potential providers in adjacent counties or within a reasonable distance have been contacted.
2. Provider(s) available, but not accepting new First Steps clients – Use this reason when any providers in the area or adjacent areas are not accepting new First Steps clients.
3. Provider(s) available, but provider AND parent not willing to travel – Use this reason when the IFSP team decides that the service should be provided in the natural environment, but no provider will go to the natural environment AND the family can not or will not travel to the provider.

#### **Natural Environments Note**

Provision of services in the natural environment, to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child, is a requirement of state and federal regulations. The provision of services outside the natural environment is only done if the needs of the child require it with the exception noted above. It is not based upon parent choice or parent convenience. For example, if there is no reason why the child's unique needs require them to receive services in a special purpose center, but the parent wants the services provided there because it is more convenient for the parent, this would not be an allowable justification for providing the services outside of the natural environment.